



LD

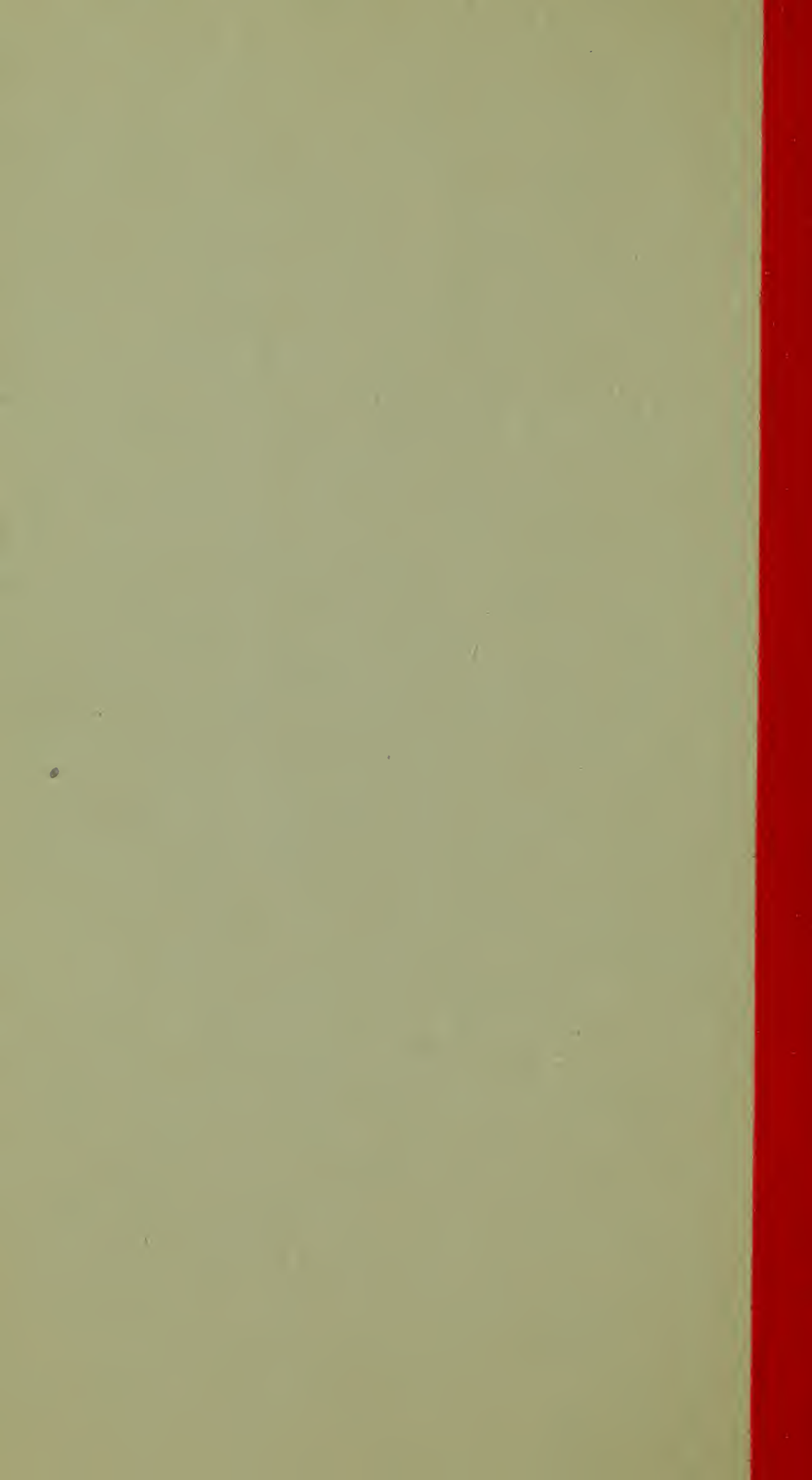
1945

1829

Author

Title

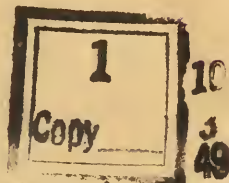
Imprint



AN

INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN



The City of Washington,

MARCH 11, 1829.

Wilson

BY S. CHAPIN, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE COLUMBIAN COLLEGE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

WASHINGTON CITY:

PRINTED BY STEPHEN C. USTICK,

1829.



L.D. 1945
1829

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

I STAND before you as a public character. The station which I occupy, will, doubtless, give some additional influence to the sentiments which I may advance. This consideration inspired me with a deep sense of responsibility, and made me anxious to select a subject, which would be best suited to the present occasion. I might have chosen to address you upon the importance of classical learning; upon the circumstances in our country, which are peculiarly favorable to the progress of science and literature; or upon the connexion between the general diffusion of knowledge, and the stability of elective governments. But these topics I have declined, and have taken for my theme, The Business of Human Life.

To gain a correct knowledge of this subject, and to act accordingly, will secure our welfare, not simply during our short probation, but during our endless existence. What then is the business of human life? In reply, I would say, that it is, in its highest design, to acquire that education in knowledge, and to form that character, which will qualify us for a future state of happiness. Before I present the proof of this sentiment, I will define what I mean by education. By this term I mean the right application of that whole combination of means, which are appointed to be employed upon

man, to give health and vigor to his constitution, dignity and grace to his manners; to develop and mature his intellectual powers; to subdue his evil propensities; and to train him up in the habits of morality and religion. As man possesses soul and body, and as he was formed to exist in two worlds, and in each of them has specific duties to perform, his education should be adapted to his complex character, and to his respective theatres of action. In order to fit him for his present station, he needs a healthy and vigorous constitution, a mind strengthened by study, and enriched by various knowledge and experience, and a heart of inflexible integrity, and yet tenderly alive to the highest welfare of his species. In a word, that man is the best educated, who possesses the greatest physical strength, the richest stores of wisdom and knowledge, and a paramount disposition to employ all his talents in honoring God, and in multiplying the sources of human enjoyment. Think not that because I have directed your attention, principally, to the future state, that I wish to encourage indifference to this life. Instead of doing this, I would say that the objects of this world were designed to excite our attention and gratitude; and that a faithful discharge of our relative duties here on earth, is one of the best preparations for the world to come. But that it should be our grand concern to acquire that knowledge, and to form that character, which will fit us for a state of blissful immortality, I shall support by two comprehensive arguments,

1. The mental endowments of man indicate, that he is designed for another and more lasting state.
2. All the appointed means of instruction and discipline are actually adapted to exert such an influence

over his mind, as is best calculated to fit him for a future world of glory.

My first argument ought not to be deemed unsound, because, in many other cases, we learn the end and uses of things from a knowledge of their properties. The wing of the bird, and the fin of the fish, determine the element, and the manner, in which they are to be employed. An inspection of the delicate and specific structure of a watch, will teach us, that it is formed, not to be thrown among the toys of children, but to be carefully kept to mark the passing hours of time. The limbs and the organs of the human body, so readily indicate the end of their formation, that even children infer, that the feet were designed for motion, the hands for labor, and the eyes for seeing. By the same mode of reasoning, we can, with equal certainty, decide for what purpose man was called into existence. What, then, are the properties of his mind, which teach us that he was formed for a second state of being.

Man is endowed with that insatiable curiosity, which all the wonders of this globe will not satisfy. Anxious to gain a knowledge of other worlds, he patiently studies the exact sciences, to enable himself to explain the phenomena of the heavenly bodies. When he has completed his calculations in the solar system, he by the aid of powerful glasses extends his researches into new tracts of space; and determines the magnitude, the distance, and the orbit of some planet, which revolves in the fields of ether far beyond his unaided sight. His memory preserves the fruits of his studies and experience. Reason guides him to a knowledge of some of the sublimest truths respecting the works and attributes of Jehovah. By the aid of imagination, he can form from

the stores of his simple ideas unequalled models in arts and manners, and read with delight those works of fiction, which paint before him specimens of excellency and glory, which far transcend any thing that can be found in real life. In this way he becomes dissatisfied with his present state and acquisitions, and is excited to make renewed efforts after higher attainments, under the animating hope, that in some future period he will realize all these creations of fancy. By the power of conscience alone he is enabled to discover the moral glories of the divine character, and is constituted a religious being.

In addition to these endowments, man possesses native and undying aspirations after enjoyments, more durable and satisfactory, than any which this earth can yield. His restless soul is perpetually searching after some new delight, and struggling, as if anxious to escape from its mortal prison, to wing its upward flight to more congenial skies. Such a mind can never be satisfied with temporal good; it needs an inheritance suited to its nature, and immortal as the joys of heaven. But this it can never find in foreign objects. Outward possessions do not constitute substantial wealth. True riches belong to the mind, and consist in those internal graces, which qualify man to find his supreme felicity in the habitual discharge of his temporal duty, and in fellowship with divine excellency.

His Creator has not only endowed him with these exalted powers, but he has opened before him an unlimited field of improvement, and surrounded him with every temptation to put forth all his powers in the pursuit of knowledge. Now, it is only upon the supposition, that man is destined for a state of endless dura-

tion, that the wisdom and benevolence of God are manifested in this reciprocal relation between the mental attributes of man, and his external means of instruction and discipline. For, if he be made to exist only for a few days, then both the powers of his mind, and his means of knowledge, are far too exalted, either for his greatest usefulness or enjoyment. Should you now be assured, that at death you are to sink into eternal oblivion, would you not be prompted to inquire, why then have we been formed with an undying curiosity to know more of the works and character of God, than what is compatible with our present advantage. Why has he spread out before us a boundless prospect. Why has he strewed the paths of science with increasing allurements, if death is so soon to put a final period to this delightful career of knowledge. Has he lifted the veil from the enchanting scenery, merely to make us mourn, that it must be quickly covered again in everlasting darkness. Why have we those strong powers of reason and imagination, by which we can gain that view of the greatness and glories of creation, which makes this earth dwindle to a point, and casts an air of burlesque over the whole scene of human affairs. Is the altar, which conscience has reared in honor to Jehovah, soon to be demolished, and the fire of human devotion to be eternally extinguished. Why this native longing after immortality; this instinctive horror at the thought of annihilation, if our short stay here bound the period of our being. True, it may be said, that these passions and powers prompt and assist man in his noblest efforts; and that, therefore, they subserve the best external interests of human society. But if man is soon to perish forever, would not a mer-

ciful God have taken care to prevent any detraction from his momentary enjoyments, by making him incapable of anticipating such an ignoble destiny. If there be no good for the upright after death, and no evil for the unjust, could not the Creator have supported his throne, without awakening a deceptive fear of future retribution; and could he not have promoted the mortal happiness of man, without palming upon him the delusive hope of heaven. How could we vindicate an earthly monarch, who should educate his son in the best manner to qualify him to inherit his crown and dominions, when it was his purpose to degrade him to the rank of a peasant.

2. As the endowments of man thus plainly suggest the end for which he was formed, so all the appointed means of education are actually adapted to exert such an influence over his mind, as is best calculated to qualify him for a second state of being. In this life our Creator is conducting upon man a process of education upon an elevated scale, and suited to his exalted rank, and to his future destination. The works of nature furnish exercises adapted to all the grades of mind. Some of them are sufficiently hard to task the greatest powers; and others, so easy, as to invite the efforts of humbler talents. The world is the temple of God, and man is the priest of nature, ordained, by being qualified, to celebrate religious service, not only in it, but for it. Placed in this temple, to enjoy the benefits of divine teachings, man appears truly great, the offspring of Jehovah, and the candidate for an unfading crown of glory. Whoever attentively reflects upon the tendency of those instructions, which God is imparting to man, must perceive that they are pre-eminently calculated to strengthen his intellectual powers; to purify his heart,

and to expand it with benevolent affection; and to strengthen his expectations, that he is destined for a state of immortality. This truth is evident from the character of those manifestations, which God has given of all his attributes. Does the astronomer wish to elevate his soul by witnessing great displays of wisdom and power, let him take up the best telescopes, and bring into his field of vision the countless host of fixed stars. Let him consider them all, as so many mighty globes of fire, forming the centres of new clusters of worlds like the sun in the solar system; let him then permit himself to be borne on the wings of imagination, till he reaches the most distant star that glimmered upon his aided sight, and fancy that he there beholds, on every hand, other suns and other systems, lighted up in endless perspective, whose immense floods of light, though they have been rushing down for nearly six thousand years, have not as yet reached our little planet, and what dilation of mind must he feel, as he thus traverses the immensity of Jehovah's works, and attempts to conceive an idea of that power, which supports the universe, and of that wisdom, which so adjusted the mechanism of the heavenly bodies, that, from the dawn of creation, they have continued to revolve in perfect uniformity and exactness. And if he be a good man, what a glow of sympathetic joy and benevolence must he feel, when he reflects upon the blessedness of that Almighty Being, who, from the throne of his glory, is continually dispensing the means of life and enjoyment to all the worlds which move around him; and is receiving, in return, their hymns of adoration and praise. There are several recorded instances of the powerful effect, which the study of astro-

nomy has produced upon the human mind. Dr. Rittenhouse of Pennsylvania, after he had calculated the transit of Venus, which was to happen June 3d, 1769, was appointed at Philadelphia, with others, to repair to the township of Norriton, and there to observe this planet until its passage over the sun's disk should verify the correctness of his calculations. This occurrence had never been witnessed but twice before by any inhabitant of our earth, and was never to be again seen by any person then living. A phenomenon so rare, and so important in its bearings upon astronomical science, was, indeed, well calculated to agitate the soul of one so alive, as he was, to the great truths of nature. The day arrived, and there was no cloud in the horizon. The observers, in silence and trembling anxiety, waited for the predicted moment of observation. It came—and in the instant of contact, an emotion of joy so powerful was excited in the bosom of Mr. Rittenhouse, that he fainted. Sir Isaac Newton, after he had advanced so far in his mathematical proof of one of his great astronomical doctrines, as to see that the result was to be triumphant, was so affected in view of the momentous truth which he was about to demonstrate, that he was unable to proceed, and begged one of his companions in study to relieve him, and carry out the calculation. The instructions, which the heavens give, are not confined to scholars; but they are imparted to the peasant and to the savage. The pious shepherd often feels a sudden expansion of mind, while attempting to form an idea of that power, which spread out and adorned the heavens with so many worlds of light.

Nor are those representations of the attributes of God, which tend to expand the soul, and assimilate it to

the divine likeness, confined to the material world. It is from the spiritual world, that the glory of God beams forth in its fullest lustre. Yes; one human mind contains greater riches, and furnishes more ennobling proofs of the being and perfections of God, than are supplied by all the systems of unorganized matter. To raise this mind from ignorance and guilt, and to prepare it for a residence in heaven, God is now expending the wealth of his treasures, and employing the most honorable and powerful agents in his kingdom. It is said that Malebranche, in reading the treatise of Des Cartes upon man, was so overpowered by the sentiments exhibited, that he was obliged to close the book, and pause, until the palpitations of his heart subsided,

The providence of God is eminently calculated to act upon the hopes and fears of man. It is true, that rewards and punishments are, in this world, unequally distributed. Fraud and injustice sometimes bask under the sun of prosperity; while honesty and righteousness are chilled under the storms of adversity. But yet the general course of things, in favor of the innocent and against the guilty, fully evinces, that, even in this life, virtue has the decided advantage over vice. Though the cruel oppressor may now prosper, yet he can but consider his secret remorse of conscience as a sure presage, that vengeance will overtake him, when inquisition shall be made for blood.

In religious institutions and ceremonies, the mode of instruction is more direct and efficient. The grand design of all the commands and precepts, doctrines and ceremonies of the Jewish economy, and, especially, of the brighter dispensation of Christianity, is to "exert a purifying and ennobling influence upon the human

mind, to make us victorious over sin, over ourselves, over peril and pain; to join us to God by filial love, and above all, by likeness of nature, by participation of his Spirit."

But why has God done so much to exhibit his own perfections. Did he put forth his powers of creation to relieve the weariness of eternal repose; or to gain the praises of adoring millions. Surely not. For he was perfectly conscious of his own excellencies before he made the worlds. Neither can the homage and admiration of all his creatures add to his essential glory and blessedness. But he has made this exhibition of himself, and required us to express before him the homage of our hearts, because this act of worship, and those truths, which respect his own character and designs, have the greatest power to stir the soul, and to form it for its future destination.

The subject, to which our attention has been given, leads us to form high anticipations of the triumphant issue of the work of education. We have not embraced the doctrine of human perfectibility, nor any visionary projects, by which we expect this fallen world is to be regenerated. But these anticipations are encouraged by substantial reasons. We have seen that education should be the first pursuit of man, since it is, in fact, the chief concern of heaven; and, that for its advancement the works of creation, the arrangements of Providence, and the whole array of positive institutions, and revealed truth, are made subservient. In its completion, the brightest glories of God, and the highest amount of human happiness, are involved. A work so dear in the sight of Heaven must be crowned with abundant success.

It is true, that education has made but slow advances. In some considerable portions of time, it has been apparently stationary; and, in others, even declining. Indeed, it has advanced by degrees so silent and inconsiderable, that they have been unheeded by the mass of mankind, and denied by some authors, who have cherished gloomy and mistaken views of human nature. But those philosophers, who have carefully collated different periods of history, and compared the results of successive dispensations, have seen abundant proof, that, on the whole, both the intellectual and moral states of the world have been greatly advanced. Nor need we be surprised at this slow movement. Various considerations lead us to suppose, that God saw it best to confine the soul, during its term of trial, in an earthly tabernacle, and to make it dependent upon bodily organs for all its knowledge of surrounding matter, in order to limit the sphere of information, and to prevent us from acquiring, in this earthly stage of our being, too clear a view of the government of the universe. The Almighty, by thus imposing temporary checks to the ardor of our curiosity, has practised upon the principles of economy. He has, in this way, reduced man to the necessity of studying well the nature and relations of the objects, that surround him in this dawn of his being, before he is admitted to that higher grade of instruction, where every impediment shall be removed from his boundless career of knowledge. But notwithstanding this slow movement, yet much has been gained. Of this truth how much more sensible should we be, if it were possible for us to retain a vivid recollection of the bright day, which we now enjoy, after we had witnessed the rapid extinction of every light in the

scientific heavens, till we were enveloped in that midnight darkness, which surrounded the first inhabitants of this world. Though each successive generation has to commence its progress in a state of infancy; yet it starts from a higher point of improvement, than did its predecessor; and this will continue to be the case, till the nations of the earth arrive at that state of intellectual and moral perfection, in which they will enjoy all the bright visions, which are now seen, afar off, by the aid of prophetic light. The advantages already acquired are highly encouraging. We are now freed from the trammels of theoretic philosophy, and from the puerilities of the syllogistic art, which, as an engine of science, kept the human mind, for nearly two thousand years, moving round in the same beaten circle. The philosophy of the mind is greatly advanced. The baleful influence of early prejudices is more fully understood, and their formation more guarded against. The laws of association are better known, and more judiciously applied in the work of education. The sun of civil and religious freedom has risen, full-orbed, and will continue to climb the heavens, till it stands in mid-day to bless the world with its cheering light. Language, the vehicle of thought and the instrument of instruction, has become more settled in its meaning, and more copious and powerful in its expression. The press, that lever which can move the world, is lending her aid in the diffusion of knowledge, and in the suppression of vice. The invention of the fluxional calculus by Newton and Leibnitz, has armed the human mind with such a powerful instrument of thought, as enables it to solve the most profound problems in the exact sciences. The modern invention of astronomical and

microscopic glasses, has brought under the inspection of the modern philosopher two worlds, both unknown to the ancients, the one on the account of extreme minuteness, and the other, on account of extreme distance. The progress, which has been lately made in chemistry and galvanism, has put into the hand of the chemist an instrument of analysis, which seems destined to develop the most hidden secrets of nature. The discovery of the power of steam, has given to man a new agent, which, on account of the extent of its application, and the greatness of its power, is beginning to affect all the great interests of society. The facilities of communication, through the medium of public roads, canals, telegraphs, and steam vessels, have, in part, annihilated distances, and brought, once remote communities, into convenient neighborhoods; and increasing intercourse is fast wearing away local distinctions and strengthening the bonds of human sympathy.

But public opinion is probably destined to be the most efficient human instrument in correcting evil customs, and in elevating the tone of public morals. In hereditary governments the power of public opinion is great; in free states it is entirely supreme. But this opinion, omnipotent as it is, has, as yet, been formed by a few leading characters. In some instances, one individual is so much the idol of his nation, that, if he publish his sentiments, and exhibit his manners, he is sure to be followed by the multitude. Swift might thus have ruled in the British kingdom, and Franklin in the American republic. With special ease may one commanding character lead the community, when he avails himself of the popular passion, which happens to agitate their minds, and opens before them a way, in which

it may be gratified. When Peter the hermit, clothed in sackcloth, visited the cities of Christendom, and, with a loud and pathetic cry, preached a general crusade, he appealed to a sentiment, which then pervaded the christian world; and all Europe was electrified by his eloquence, and seemed to be loosened from its ancient bed. Princes and prelates, nobles and peasants, flocked to the cross, demanding to be led against the infidels to dislodge them from the holy land. Men can be controlled, not only by appeals to their passions, but by arguments addressed to their rational and moral powers. These principles of action are ever on the side of truth and duty. Whenever the benevolent teacher endeavors to enlighten and persuade men, he will be supported by these internal advocates, so that, if he fail, it will be because prejudice or passion silenced their pleadings.

Another important mean of forming and controlling the human mind, is the power of sympathetic imitation. This power, though it exposes men to be led astray by designing demagogues and tyrants, yet was, obviously, intended to give to the man of wisdom and goodness an ascendant over a congregated multitude, and to enable him to excite and propagate among them the enthusiasm of moral sentiment, that he may enlist them on the side of virtue and religion. In numerous assemblies, the power of sympathy is great, and, therefore, their passions are quickly excited, and their physical force is easily controlled. Whitefield could melt ten thousand hearers into tears of grief, or joy, and the mighty Mirabeau could breathe all the purpose and fire of his own soul into the revolutionary mobs of France, and make them the terrible executioners of his bloody schemes of ambition. Philanthropic divines, and orators, what a

field lies before you, what materials to work upon; what trophies may you here gain; what an abundant harvest may you here reap. Over assembled thousands of rational beings, thus endowed and thus pliant under the power of eloquence, what wonders might be done by a Demosthenes, animated by the spirit of a Howard.

But, for our further encouragement we have higher reasons to expect success in advancing the interests of learning and religion, than any which can be found in the properties of the human mind. The analogy of Providence, and the import of inspired predictions, authorize us to believe, that, as time advances, the feebler means of instruction will be less employed, while the more powerful will be rendered increasingly efficacious in effecting that change in man, which will secure his future felicity. For two thousand years, God left men to learn his character and will by the silent exhibition of his perfections, by those signatures of his existence and designs, which they could trace in his works and providences. He, then, for the purposes of general benevolence, delivered, in an audible voice, a code of laws to a favored people, and instituted among them a showy and costly ritual. This symbolical mode of teaching was superseded by the direct and more efficient system of Christianity. The law is now written, not upon tables of stone, but upon the human heart. Now we, instead of learning our duty by mere shadows, are instructed by the soul-subduing charms of eloquence, by living example, and by the agency of the Almighty Spirit. Nor do even we enjoy the best advantages for improvement. Knowledge is yet to be greatly increased; teachers are to become much more skilful, and means are to be rendered vastly more productive. "The light

of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold ;” and the efforts, to change this sinful world into a moral paradise, are yet to be as prompt and efficacious, as are the rains and suns of heaven in fructifying the face of the earth. When the influence of the gospel shall reign upon the thrones of princes, in the halls of legislation, and in the courts of justice, when governors and magistrates shall exhibit in their lives the graces of Christianity, when the promised aid of the Spirit shall descend upon their labors like showers upon the mown grass, what a scene of moral beauty will this world then present.

The subject which we have discussed leads us to reflect upon the interesting character and influence of our public seminaries of learning. There are in this infant nation more than fifty colleges and universities, beside a very large number of academies and high schools. These institutions, especially those of the first class, are furnished with well-selected libraries, costly apparatus, competent boards of instructors, and are fostered by public and private patronage. The flower of our youth is within their walls, possessing minds in a soft and pliant state. Their opinions, generally speaking, are not formed, their habits are not settled, and their intellectual and moral powers are unfolding themselves, ready to take the form and direction, which their teachers may give them. What must be the momentous issue of the steady action of this powerful combination of means upon this class of our youthful population. A moral engine so mighty, and so constantly playing off its strength upon this choicest portion of our citizens, must produce results to all the

dearest interests of our country, which will far exceed human calculation. It is to the young men, who are now prosecuting their public studies, that we are to look for the next supply of divines, civilians, physicians, instructors, and of our principal military and naval commanders. The men, who now sustain these characters, must soon be called from all the concerns of this life, and leave their places to be filled by a new generation. We cannot feel indifferent as to the character which those men are to sustain, who are soon to take charge of all our high interests of religion and government, and who are to be the arbiters of the final destinies of the children, whom we may leave behind us. In what manner, and in reference to what end, shall our youth be educated. Mere accident is not to decide their character and their future conduct. But the streams, which are to flow from the fountains of knowledge, will refresh, and fertilize our goodly heritage, or spread over it the waters of death, just as our systems of education, in our seats of science, are good, or bad. We have melancholy proofs of the powerful influence, which they exert upon the welfare of nations. Look at the institutions of learning in Europe, and you will find, that many of them are the haunts of dissipation, and, that they embrace members, who are the advocates of those sentiments, which go to sap the foundations of revealed religion, and human accountability. Whence flowed that late tide of infidelity, which spread death and mourning in its progress, and which threatened to overwhelm, at once, both the throne and the altar. Did it not proceed from their ancient institutions of science, and from their numerous Alumni. And, should we examine the state of colleges in our own country, we

should find, at least in some of them, much to stain our pride, and to alarm our fears. How many once lovely youth, who, when they entered them, possessed a delicate sense of moral distinctions, have left them with sceptical notions and licentious habits. Why, in any instance, does this melancholy result attend the course of public education. Is progress in science the necessary road to infidelity. Have we a religion, fit only to dupe and to keep in awe the ignorant herd, but which cannot endure the eye of philosophic criticism. No, surely. Christianity dreads no scrutiny of investigation. She courts the day, and is willing even to be put to the torture, not fearing that she shall utter any thing derogatory to her heavenly origin. But the cause of these evils is chiefly to be found in the fact, that the great design of education has not been kept steadily in view. Attention has been more exclusively directed to physical and intellectual science in our colleges, than in the schools of Greece and Rome. For this difference between modern institutions and those of antiquity, some reasons may be assigned. Among the ancients, physical science was, comparatively speaking, but little known. Their philosophy was, principally, confined to the nature of man, and to his moral relations. Their wise men; such as Aristotle, Plato, Seneca and many others, made the human mind their principal study. This was emphatically true of Socrates. "Man, and what relates to man, were the only subjects on which he chose to employ himself. To this purpose all his inquiries and conversations turned. On what was pious, what impious; what honorable, what base; what just, what unjust; what wisdom, what folly; what courage, what cowardice; what a state or political community,

what the character of a statesman or a politician ; what the government of men, what the character of one equal to such a government. It was on these, and other matters of the same kind, that he used to discourse ; in which subjects those who were knowing, he used to esteem men of honor and goodness, and those who were ignorant to be no better than the basest of slaves.” But among the moderns the attention of students has been too much turned from these subjects, especially since the consideration of final causes has been so much exploded by the inductive philosophy. In consequence of this, ethical studies have retired to monasteries and schools of divinity ; while in our literary institutions, such have been the advances in natural philosophy, in the higher branches of mathematics, in the liberal arts, and in polite learning, as to give to these subjects such an all-absorbing character, that moral science has been permitted to languish in comparative neglect. It was this fact, and its unhappy consequences, which led me to select the subject, to which your attention has been invited. This fact is my apology, if any be needed, for giving to this address so serious a cast. Think not, however, that I wish to convert our seats of science into halls of mere theology. Let the present branches of literature and science be retained, and prosecuted with untiring zeal. For at best, we can do but little more, during the short space allotted us, than to initiate our scholars into the usual branches of knowledge, and lay a tolerable foundation for their future professional studies. This foundation I would not wish to narrow ; for knowledge is the food of the mind, and one of the two grand pillars that support our free Constitution. Nor would I introduce into our colleges

systems of divinity, trammelled by sectarian peculiarities. But I would encourage that religion, which is as free as the common light of the sun, and as healthful and refreshing as the breezes of morning—a religion resting on a broad basis—the being and perfections of God, the character and relations of man, and upon the peculiar doctrines and precepts of Revelation. Ought not a religion of this extended and elevated character to hold a prominent place in our public course of education. “Since this world is a system of benevolence, and consequently its author the object of unbounded love and adoration, benevolence and piety are our only true guides, in our inquiries into it; the only keys which will unlock the mysteries of nature, and clues which lead through her labyrinths.” How delightful to the benevolent instructor, while teaching his students the laws of matter and of mind, to refer them often to the bright aspects of the benevolent purpose and will of their Creator, and to remind them, that these intimations should be improved as monitors to duty, and as sources of the most pure and exalted delight. Does he unfold to them the treasures of the ancient classics, he can suggest to them, that the authors of these lasting monuments of mind, studied profoundly the nature of the human soul, and that, therefore, they still excel the moderns in painting the passions, and in touching all the springs of moral action. And from the fact that they are now studied by every scholar with the same delight, with which they were read, more than two thousand years ago, he may take occasion to prove to them, that the laws of the intellectual world are as fixed and lasting, as those which regulate the material system. What is there in Christianity to narrow

the mind and depress the spirits. Does it not contain our chief solace in the conflicts of life, and all our joyous hopes of the heavenly state. It calls forth within us a mighty energy for our own elevation, and makes discoveries of a vast, bold, illimitable, character. Why then should it not hold a prominent place in our course of education. "Gratitude and every motive of virtue demand of us a reverence for the gospel. Protestant Christianity has in former times given learning such support as learning can never repay. The history of Christendom bears witness to this. The names of Erasmus, of Grotius, of Bacon and a host of luminaries of science, who rise up like a wall of fire around the cause of Christianity will bear witness to this. Do you want examples of learned Christians? I could not recount them all in an age. You need not be told that

Learning has borne such fruit in other days,
On all her branches : piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews."

The sentiment, which we have sustained, reminds us of some defects in various departments of education. In civil society there are important professions, which ought to be filled by men, previously prepared to discharge, with uprightness and ability, their respective duties. Hence we have schools and teachers, designated by appropriate names. While each class of instructors have a specific branch of education, which they are particularly to conduct, yet they are all bound to aim at the same grand object—the maturation of the imperishable mind for a happier condition in the invisible world. For that Being, who formed us, ever keeps that same

high end in view in sustaining physical laws, in the choice and adjustment of means, and in all his direct agency upon the human soul. Whether we stand in his vast tabernacle, to receive instruction from the earth and skies, from the bright day and the starry night; and to watch the movements of that providence, which fully proves, that God is the governor of the world; whether our attention is turned within to study the more instructive wonders of the spiritual world, and to be taught from the throne of conscience; or whether we are conducted into his consecrated house to enjoy still higher advantages for improvement, the design and tendency of the instructions of each station, is precisely the same, —to lead us to cherish the highest admiration of the character of God, and to make it our daily concern to gain higher degrees of conformity to his divine likeness. This perfect example is doubtless intended for universal imitation. When did jurists, or physicians, or classical professors, obtain a dispensation from their Creator to discard all moral instruction from their schools. Is the noble science of law to be acquired, to render a man more ingenious to increase its boasted obscurity, or to make him a more powerful competitor in the mercenary struggle for fame and wealth. Why is not the instructor in jurisprudence bound to teach his pupils, that civil society is as much an ordinance of Heaven, as is the Messiah's kingdom; and that it is as truly designed to aid man in securing the end of his being, as is the christian church. It is not a combination simply for the protection of life and property; but it is an association for moral improvement. "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." All wise law-givers study the human mind with deep attention, that they may

frame their laws according to the moral nature and relations of man. It is true, that the civil arm employs harsher methods of discipline, than are used in those communities, where men are to be governed by the strength of moral sentiment. But this does not prove, that civil courts are ordained for purposes, altogether different from ecclesiastical tribunals. They are dissimilar in character, but alike in the effects, which they are intended to produce. Magistracy, in supporting human laws, by physical pains and penalties, performs a service very similar to that of conscience, in supporting divine laws by the terrors of remorse and the love of self respect and approbation.

The physiologist, while lecturing upon the functions and properties of living animals, can hardly refrain from expatiating before his pupils upon the wisdom and benevolence of that Being, who is the author of the human constitution; and who, while he adjusted the mechanism of the heavenly bodies, and set them in motion to form a sublime method of instruction, had the same object in view in the wonderfully curious organization of the human body. In a word, all, to whom is entrusted the culture of mind, from the humble maid, who serves in the nursery, up through all the rising grades of teachers, to the consecrated bishop, who waits at the altar, should conspire in effecting one grand result,—the advancement of the human mind to the highest degree of intellectual and moral excellence. In this way they initiate their pupils into the science of useful and happy living, and become the honored imitators of their Creator in his benevolent designs.

Perhaps no set of instructors holds a more important place in this work, than those, who are employed in public seminaries of learning.

You see, my companions in labor, that your work is arduous, and your responsibilities great. The illustrious Fenelon, the boast of the French nation and the brightest ornament in the Catholic church, was deeply affected in view of his duty, and of his high accountability, when he consented to become the private instructor of the Duke of Burgundy. He did not deem it degrading to his high rank and talents, to take charge of that young Prince, who then stood heir to the throne of France. For he well knew, that his due education would affect, not only the destinies of his own nation, but these, of all the kingdoms of Europe. He trembled, to reflect, that to him it belonged to form a character, to occupy so high a station, and one whose future conduct would, so extensively, affect the state of the world. He, therefore, employed all his rare endowments in laboring to give that character to his royal pupil, which would fit him to become the ruler over a great and powerful people, and to support a commanding influence among cotemporary monarchs. Thus, Sirs, to you is entrusted the care of youth, who have commenced an existence of boundless duration. And, as you have so much the control over all their associations, in this moulding period of their life, you must be, in a greater or less degree, the arbiters of their future happiness, or misery. Under the combined influence of learning and grace, they may be trained for that immortal crown of blessedness, before which the proudest ensigns of earthly sovereigns fade away into nothing. It is from you, Gentlemen, that the community are expecting well prepared agents to manage their public concerns; and the peace, the wealth, and the glory of this nation may be affected, and that too, for

centuries to come, by the character of those scholars whom you may form for their service.

The Trustees of this Seminary will permit me, on the present occasion, to congratulate them on the character of the work, in which they are engaged. In founding this college, and furnishing it with the means of knowledge, you have had respect to the present and future welfare of the rising generation. You have, at once, shown your veneration for divine example, and love for your country, in making the culture of the youthful mind the object of your high concern. What object in this lower world, so worthy of your best efforts, as the thinking, imperishable, and mighty spirit of man. This mind appears, in the sight of God, in all its infinite worth. Hence he has placed it under the best circumstances to secure the purpose of its being. Though he is making countless agents act upon the human mind, and though he is instructing it by many and various voices and symbols; yet, in all these numberless ways, his unchanging design, is to promote the growth of its power of action, and its susceptibility of enjoyment. This grand truth, I wish to exhibit before you in the boldest relief. But this truth, like many others of vital moment, is slowly rising into notice and power. As yet, it is hardly above the horizon. How feeble is its influence over those, who have some faint conceptions of its existence. What object of equal worth, has been so lightly esteemed, and misused, as the ethereal spirit of man,—that spirit, which is capable of embracing the present, the past, and the future; of measuring the earth, of scanning the heavens, and formed to hold delightful intercourse with the pure spirits above. Some make it their chief concern to train its noble powers, to the

pursuits of avarice. By some, it is disciplined, like the limbs, and muscles of the ancient athlete, to enter the combat for the ephemeral wreath of honor. Others, again, seduce it from its divine rank, and teach it to look for its supreme delight in the unrestrained indulgence of animal passions. But if all men could be made to see, that to purify, to instruct, to correct, to exercise, and to enrich the human soul in the highest attainable degrees, is the object, which Jehovah has ever had in view in the operations of his hand, who would not feel himself bound to co-operate in this benevolent work of Heaven. Could this cardinal truth be placed in the light of noon, so that parents, and teachers, and the whole community, could behold its glory, who, then, would dare to set up a counter interest, who would think himself at liberty to prostitute the heaven-born spirit of man, and to confine it exclusively, to the momentary pursuits of earth. Let it be our care not to be involved in the guilt of aiding in this moral degradation. What should we say to the Prince, who should take his gold for his chariot wheels, or his precious stones and jewels, to pave the walks of his court. You need not fear, that the moral culture of the mind will cramp youthful genius, or quench its fire in the pursuits of classical learning. It is not the sentiments of religion, but it is dissipation, and indolence, which are the grand enemies to scientific eminence. The profoundest scholars, and the poets, who have soared the highest, and touched the most thrilling notes, have obtained their inspirations, fast by the throne of God. Let it then be your aim to treat the human mind, according to its original endowments, and with steady reference to its future welfare. To animate you, gentlemen, in your important undertaking,

you are surrounded by peculiar encouragements. You are blessed with the happiest form of government, and with rulers, who well know, that our dear-bought freedom cannot be preserved and transmitted to posterity, without the general diffusion of knowledge, and the prevalence of sound morality. In the selection of a site for your seminary, you have been specially happy. While it is blessed with the best means of health, it commands a prospect of unrivalled charms. Placed, as it is, in view of the Capitol and Metropolis of our nation, it presents to the student local advantages of superior value. Let us, then, while we devoutly implore the aid of that Almighty Being, without whose blessing the best concerted measures, for the benefit of man, must prove abortive, be unwearied in our efforts to promote the growth of this institution, and the Columbian College may yet be a distinguished blessing to our flourishing republic.

Before I close permit me to turn my attention to the students of this college.

Young Gentlemen, you have learnt the design of your existence, and the end for which you must employ all your powers, to render your life an everlasting blessing. Indeed, if I should intimate, that you are sceptical, respecting this cardinal truth, I should, implicitly, impeach the soundness of your judgment; for the overwhelming arguments, by which it is supported, are fully in your view. The only question is, whether you are immovably fixed to make this truth the supreme law of your lives. What purpose can be more worthy your rank, or more auspicious to your future prospects. Upon you rests a greater weight of obligation to make an unreserved consecration of your talents, to improve the

character and condition of man, than has rested upon any preceding generation. You have come upon the theatre of life, at a period, in which the facilities, and the demands for benevolent action, are the most multiplied. You have the richest blessings to impart; you speak a language, already extensively spoken, and which promises fairer, than any other, to become universal; and you belong to a nation, possessing unrivalled advantages in commerce. Think not that you are too feeble to make an impression upon the human family. Luther, Bacon, and Locke, did not think so. They acted upon the principle, that they, individually, could exert an influence, which might be felt round the globe. The cause of learning, and of reform, have, in all ages of the world, advanced under the influence of those few men, who have stepped forward, and labored with all their might, without stopping to inquire, whether they should fail, if not supported by the concurring multitude. Enter, then, upon this work with all the enthusiasm, which its nature and consequences ought to inspire. In making the growth of mind your first object, you need not, to secure success, become monks, or ascetics; but you should make this your object, that you may best answer the claims of your country. The number, who are engaged to advance her physical interest, are vastly greater, than that of those, who are laboring to increase her moral strength. It is the agency of minds of pregnant powers, and of that stern integrity, which no bribes can debauch, which our country needs, more than an increase of capital, or of manual laborers. Into your hands the desk and the bar, the bench, and the seats of legislation, are soon to be resigned. Can you fill them with dignity and success, if you are

strangers to the protracted toils of study and of thinking. Whatever be the profession, which you may choose, set your standard of excellency high, and say, with a tone, which nothing can change, that point shall be gained, and never rest till your object is won. High aims in early life, and undying perseverance, have formed those illustrious characters, who have conferred the brightest honors upon the human race. To discipline the mind, according to your wishes, you are supplied with the most appropriate and powerful means. Does the soul suffer its divine glories to be sullied in the mire of lusts, you can paint before it the folly and wretchedness of this sensual slavery. Is it led astray by some dangerous spell, you have the means of breaking the enchantment. Is it involved in moral darkness, you may carry to it the light of life. Is the subject of your instructions bold and obdurate, is his neck stiff, like an iron sinew, you are armed with the terrors of the Lord,—with weapons, sharp and massive, and which, like the shining of God's glittering spear, may, at once, terrify and subdue the stoutest heart. Is he captivated by earthborn glories, lift the veil, which hides from his sight the future tribunal, let the light of eternity shine upon him, and all the charms of this deceitful world may vanish from his view. This intellectual culture, when aided by the power of grace in relation to yourselves, will put you in possession of sources of enjoyment, which the vicissitudes of time can never destroy. Taught by the light of Revelation, and by the disasters which often sweep away the richest earthly inheritance, you will see the folly of resting your hopes upon such uncertain objects. You will build your house on a high foundation, where you will enjoy perpetual sunshine,

while you hear the thunder of the distant tempest. But, young gentlemen, if you are not yet resolved to make the advancement of mind in moral and intellectual excellency your greatest care, let me remind you, that you cannot, with impunity, wave such a resolution. The obligation, which rests upon you to do so, results from your endowments and relations; and it is as much beyond your power to cast it off, as it is to effect your own annihilation, or to dethrone the Majesty of heaven. It does not belong to you to say what shall be the number of your talents, or the nature of your connctions. These are unalterably fixed by that Being, with whom there is no shadow of turning. It is only for you to say, whether these talents shall be improved, or abused, whether your relations shall be sustained with honor, or with ignominy, and, whether your undying spirit shall be fitted to swell the chorus of heaven, or the wailings of despair, In view of alternatives, marked with such a momentous difference, you cannot be ignorant of the path of wisdom.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 908 617 3